
A REPLY

—TO—

THE APPENDIX OF MR. LESJEUR'S
CRITICISM NO. 2.

By "VINDEX."

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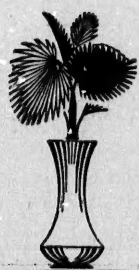
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CRITICISM NO. 2.

By "VINDEK."



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MR. LeSUEUR, in an appendix to his recent pamphlet in reply to the Bishop of Ontario, offers some remarks on my criticism of his former essay. His effort has been summed up by one well qualified to judge, who said "it is really no reply to you, but is provoking." That it is really no reply to me the reader will be fully aware before he has finished these pages : that it is provoking enough in its ingenious evasions and insinuations will also be manifest.

I am compelled to leave town for some weeks on public duty, and my time being limited I must write *currente calamo*.

I desire, simply, that our good and impartial jury, the readers of these pamphlets, will note the points I make in the following pages ; reperuse Mr. LeSueur's "Appendix" and the former pamphlet of "Vindex ;" and then I shall not be afraid of their verdict.

Mr. LeSueur's position in the Appendix is weakness itself. It occupies only four pages of his pamphlet, and yet there are in these, two clear perversions of my words and meaning, two clear evasions of the points at issue, besides other defects. This is a pretty strong indictment. Now for the proof :

EVASIONS OF POINTS AT ISSUE.

1. Not able to meet the point raised in my pamphlet under the head of "*An Imperfect Analysis*," he has recourse to an evasive device which he thinks will serve his pur-

pose. "Vindex," he discovers to be a Presbyterian clergyman, and this fact coupled with a reference to the "Westminster Confession" is enough to turn attention from the defects in his own reasoning. It is the old trick of "drawing a herring across the trail."

"Vindex," so far as the positions taken in his pamphlet are concerned, may or may not be a Presbyterian clergyman; it is not of any moment to the reader who he may be. The Confession of Faith may furnish food for thought and for discussion to greater minds than either "Vindex's" or Mr. LeSueur's, but it does not affect in the least the truth of the statement made in that paragraph; as I simply vindicated there a place for intelligent Christian thinkers, of whatever denomination.

2. A second evasive device to which I call attention is even less pardonable.

"Vindex" had said, "It is well to have it clearly understood that Evolution, as limited by known facts, does not deprive us of a single argument for the existence of God, and that the question of the supernaturalness of the Christian religion is not to be settled by a few well-worn, oft-repeated and unworthy sneerings at the miracles of the Old Testament."

On this Mr. LeSueur remarks, "Somehow I never hear that smooth, pebbly phrase, 'well-worn sneerings,' without being reminded, *I scarcely know how*, of a remark made by the Rev. Phillips Brooks, of Boston: 'There is nothing so terrible as the glimpses we get occasionally into a minister's unbelief, &c., &c.'"

Certainly it is difficult to know what connection the phrase has with the quotation. The following illustration may shed some light on this mysterious connection. In one of our colleges there was a student who had no knack of remembering or of telling stories and little appreciation of them when told. He was not, however, to be outdone by his classmates in this social art. He carefully wrote out in a

note-book a series of what he thought good stories. These he committed to memory. When one of his classmates told a good story he would say, "this reminds me," and forthwith gave story on page one. Another would tell his story and then our friend would say, "this reminds me," and forthwith gave story on page two, and so on he would give his stories consecutively, irrespective of connection, but always with the true story-telling phrase, "this reminds me."

Now, our explanation is, that our friend Mr. LeSueur had this quotation nicely written out in his note-book. It has no bearing on the subject in hand but is a hit at ministers, and so, with "this reminds me," he must bring it forth. What connection the quotation has with the phrase, and still more what connection ministers' unbelief can have with the paragraph criticised, will puzzle the acutest of his readers to discern. They, too, will "scarcely know how." The device was not a bad one: but I must ask Mr. LeSueur to go back and face frankly the question at issue.

In the meantime I will remark that I know ministers of the Gospel perhaps as well as Phillips Brooks, and know that as a rule they are men of faith, although not strangers to the questionings of mind and heart incident to this age of probing and proving. Moreover, I believe that no one would resent more energetically than Phillips Brooks himself the inference our Essayist wishes to draw from his somewhat rhetorical statement.

In view of the nature of the arguments above referred to, may we not fairly apply to Mr. LeSueur words which he has chosen to apply to another, that "here we have a critic whose ways are, to say the least, peculiar?"

The statement that there is "a general, and, as it were, concerted avoidance" of the subject of miracles by the clergy, shows the Essayist's ignorance of the preaching and teaching in the Christian community. Ministers are constantly blamed for spending so much time on evidences. They treat the matter seriously and they rightfully ask from the

opponents of Christianity more of argument and less of petty sarcasm and sneer.

PERVERSIONS OF MEANING.

I now come to sins of deeper dye. Indeed, for one making such claims for fairness, &c., &c., as our Essayist does, it is to me incomprehensible how he could so manifestly pervert an opponent's meaning to his own advantage.

1. He declares that I "tell people beforehand that, if they once admit the resurrection they will be forever estopped from questioning any marvel, however grotesque, that may be asserted to stand in any kind of relation to it."

What I really stated and distinctly argued is the very reverse of this. (Cf. pp. 8 & 9.)

I stated: "That in order to do away with the supernaturalness of the Christian religion he (Mr. L.) must be able to explain, on purely natural grounds, the existence of Christianity, the experiences of Christians, and the life and character of Jesus Christ:" that "before he sweeps away the miraculous he must show sufficient reason for discrediting the fact of Christ's resurrection:" that "Christianity is ready to answer with its life for the truth of this fact: its life is not so bound up with every objection the unbelieving caviller may urge:" that "until these central vital questions are fairly met, it is out of place for those who do not believe in Revelation to ask us to skirmish all over the ground of Old Testament history:" that "once admit the fact of Christ's resurrection, and the claims of Christ as a Divine Saviour, and we *will be prepared to review the whole course of Bible history.*"

Surely this is the reverse of "estopping" further inquiry when the fact of Christ's resurrection is admitted.

What to make of this singular perversion of my meaning I scarcely know. Did the mistake arise from carelessness in reading my statements? I am loath to think my critic could thus err through lack of discernment or that he would wilfully misrepresent me, and I have little doubt he

will be ready to admit his error. He was hard up, however, for something to attack, and so framed a proposition against which he might hurl his familiar weapons. The proposition is not mine but his, and he can assault it to his heart's content.

Our essayist has discovered that there are those "who hold that there are miracles and miracles even in the Bible." It would be a greater discovery to find those who do not. What Christian, not to say clergyman, ever told Mr. LeSueur that the taking of Jericho, and the resurrection of Christ, were of equal importance? The former is an event embedded in the stream of Revelation-history of little importance in itself, and having no appreciable bearing upon any individual in particular, or mankind in general. The latter is the great central fact of our religion, the centre of our life and hope, and is a matter of evidence.

For my own part I am heartily sick of the perpetual reference made by Mr LeSueur, and those of his stripe, to "the collapse of the walls of Jericho, the uncomfortable journey of Jonah," &c., &c. To me it is a sign of pitiful weakness on their part, for whether these matters are settled as I would have them or as Mr. LeSueur would have them, they do not really affect the question of the validity of miracles or the truth of Christianity. Our essayist and his friends should learn not to confuse questions affecting the evidences of Christianity, with those that pertain simply to the nature of Revelation.

With regard to the evidence for the fact of Christ's resurrection, the matter does not stand, as Mr. LeSueur puts it, as giving merely plausible grounds to those who want to believe it.* The evidence is strictly historical, to be dealt with according to the laws affecting such evidence, and has convinced many a mind that did not want to believe it. It is not many days since some millions of Christian people,

* We refer those wishing a concise statement of this evidence to the tract of Prebendary Row. issued by the Christian Evidence Society.

including the best and wisest and greatest of mankind declared their belief that the evidence was sufficient to satisfy their minds. "What if some do not believe? Shall their unbelief make the truth of God of none effect?"

2. In the very next paragraph Mr. LeSueur performs another singular freak for such a critic. He changes an important word, and then resents the use of the word he has chosen to introduce. He says—"to my critic's remark, 'that there is no motive or plea or influence for good in this creed of materialism which is not at the service of Christianity', I reply first that I never professed a creed of *materialism*."

What I did say (p. 12) is:—"There is no motive, or plea, or influence for good in this creed of naturalism which is not at the service of Christianity, whilst in the Gospel we have additional motives and influences towards right living of the greatest moment."

So far as I know there is only one edition of "Vindex's" pamphlet to quote from, and why Mr. LeSueur should substitute the word "Materialism" for "Naturalism" in his quotation it is for him to explain.

The only way fairly to meet my statement given above would be to point out distinctly "some influences for good" not at the service of Christianity. This Mr. LeSueur does not do; and moreover cannot do. He merely states that there are "lines of thought and influence which are just as unknown to the vast majority of Christians as the Vedic poem." Mr. LeSueur does not even say they are lines of thought and influences *for good*. If they are "for good" let him indicate what they are and how they are likely to operate for good and why they are not at the service of Christianity; if they are not "for good," then I trust they will forever remain as unknown to ordinary Christians as the Vedic poems.

I would, before leaving this point, in all charity remind Mr. LeSueur of the virtue of accurate quotations and *mutatis mutandis* apply to himself the complimentary language in which he has chosen to address the Bishop of Ontario (p. 12)

"the perversion in these cases is so gross that I decline to believe it was deliberately perpetrated by the learned author of "Modern Thought:" still it does seem to me discreditable that Mr. LeSueur should *under any circumstances* (italics his) have put forward the erroneous representations which we find in this essay."

The foregoing are the chief points on which I desire to criticize and correct Mr. LeSueur; but before I close I must advert to one or two of his assumptions. I do so lest our good readers should suppose that we admit the "ex-cathedrâ" statements of Mr. LeSueur on these matters of scientific definition. He declares that he finds in us "looseness of expression, on the subject of evolution." Let any one read the few propositions I laid down pp. 5 and 6 as defining my position on this question and read in contrast the discursive statements of Mr. LeSueur, and he can decide on whose side is the looseness of expression. We are disposed to take evolution for all that it is worth as an explanation of "the actual course of events on the earth" but we refuse to take it for more or allow it to drive out of currency better coin.

There are other minor matters to which I might properly refer, but I do not wish to disturb the real points of my argument by raising small and unimportant questions for disputation.

The reader who has followed us so far will have perceived that Mr. LeSueur makes but a poor showing in his reply. This I attribute not to a lack of ability, but to the lack of a good cause to defend. I only wish he would use his pen in the furtherance of that Gospel of Truth and Love, in which he will not be likely to "wound the feelings" of the community or give needless pain to any. I appreciate to its fullest extent the essayist's desire that we should be candid and charitable, and seek to understand one another. If, however, our differences are superficial, as Mr. LeSueur avers, I do not understand his position in regard to what is dis-

inctive of the Christian religion, nor my own. I understand Joseph Cook when he speaks of natural law as the will of God, and think I know what he means when he speaks of them as God. I understand what is meant by law—not prohibitory—but the ever-widening interpretation of the universe; more than this, I think I understand what the great Apostle meant when he said—"Walk in the Spirit"—the positive not the prohibitory and in a higher sphere. But more than this, and here our difference widens and is not superficial: "We live by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us." We believe in a risen Lord, "whom having not seen we love in whom though now we see Him not yet believing we rejoice." This is not of the intellect merely, it is "in the deeper region of the heart." What agreement have you with us here, my brother?



